

## Elevinyl by orphan\_account

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**Summary:**

Mike loved to go to Hawkins only used record shop. It closes around the same time he has to move. When he returns he sees there is a new record store there and meets the pretty girl who owns it.

# 1. Sound Connection

## Author's Note:

This story is completely self-indulgent.

It takes two of my favourite things, Mileven (duh!) and Music, more specifically various bands.

My favourite band is T.Rex, so I made Mike's that also. I tried to capture the thrill I got every time I found a T.Rex album I didn't have, or didn't know about.

Like I said completely self-indulgent, most of you will want to skip this one.

“You might want to sit down for this Mike.”

*Shit. She couldn't get it. It didn't come in. Ah well.*

Mike couldn't keep the disappointment from his voice. “I'm sitting.”

“It came in.”

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Will's brother Jonathan was into some good music... and he was into some music that absolutely sucked. At least according to Mike. He wasn't really into the new wave of British music, his tastes were firmly planted in the seventies. So when Will told him that his brother suggested that Mike might like T.Rex, he wasn't really interested in even giving it a try.

The only second hand record store in Hawkins, Melvald's Groove, wasn't very big, but Mike was in there every Saturday without fail. He loved the sound of the bell jingle that was tied to the door every time he went in.

He'd gone through every single album they had. He could almost tell by looking at bins if there were new ones that had been added or some had been sold.

He'd almost memorized the order the albums were in for each alphabetical section.

There were albums that he kept seeing and they sparked his curiosity. An album by a band called Babe Ruth, looked like a photo album on the front. An album by a band called Thor. A blond bodybuilder holding back Doberman's, and yes, T.Rex, one called *Electric Warrior*, and another called *The Slider*.

He avoided them based on Jonathan via Will's recommendation.

At first, Mike didn't have that many albums, a few K-Tel's that he listened to a lot, and some others new ones he'd gotten for birthdays in the past. He made some pocket money mowing lawns, and a few babysitting jobs, but for the most part he didn't have a lot of cash, he was not going buy a brand new album for ten dollars, not with a second hand record store downtown.

He started buying albums for \$1.95. For a second hand album that was a good price point between a worn album cover and maybe a few ticks could be heard on the vinyl but that was rare. With the higher prices \$2.95, 3.95, etc. The covers were in much better shape, and obviously the vinyl.

They even had a fifty-cent bin, where vinyl went to die, if it wasn't

selling, or a newer, better copy had come in.

Mike did not consider himself an audiophile, so pristine sound wasn't that much of an issue for him, but the fifty-cent albums were usually in bad shape.

It became his Saturday routine. He'd spend a good hour in the store flipping through every single album. Even in the fifty-cent bin.

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Mike's life was changed forever on two different occasions.

The first time, happened on a Saturday. He felt like he was in a music slump. He'd been listening to the same albums over and over again. It was time for some new music.

He was going to buy one of the albums he saw every Saturday, at Melvald's

He decided he was going to buy that T.Rex album, *Electric Warrior*. He already knew the one song off the album they played on the radio, *Bang a Gong*. The song was ok.

Mike English teacher in school told the class about foreshadowing and how Shakespeare used it in his plays. Mike didn't think much of it, till years later when he actually experienced it.

It was the Saturday he went to buy the album. He knew it was about eleven albums into the T section. He saw the *Thor* was there as usual but not the T.Rex. Not any T.Rex.

Mike was a little bummed out, so he went to the fifty-cent bin before leaving the store.

There it was!

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When Mike started to really listen to classic rock, he bought a book at the mall to give him some guidance. *The Harmony Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock*. It said “New Edition” on the front and later he learned it was actually the third edition of the book.

Mike always thought they should call it the Bible of Rock, but nowadays it would be politically incorrect, no matter how true it was then.

He looked up the *Electric Warrior* in the book. He was surprised to find out it wasn't the first T.Rex album.

Even though he wasn't an audiophile, he always listened to his albums for the first time on headphones.

The first song played. *Mambo Sun*.

A few seconds into the song and T.Rex was now Mike's favourite group. He was having a hard time believing how much he liked the song.

He needed to get all the albums.

This led to the second most important event in his life.

Meeting El.

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That summer things things happened that he had mixed feelings over. He found out about both on the same day. Don Melvald was retiring, and Mike's dad had a contract in Indianapolis so they were moving to a house provided by the company he worked for, but keeping the current house in Hawkins. They would move back.

Eventually.

He loved Melvald's Groove, the albums he bought there made up more than ninety percent of his record collection. He was really going to miss going there. It had become part of his life.

The minor consolation was that he was moving to a bigger city, which would have more and larger second hand record stores.

But he would have no friends. No one to play the music from all the bands he was discovering.

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Mike wanted to leverage his interest in music into some kind of career. He fiddled around on an acoustic guitar, but one night he was dusting it off, that was how little he used it, and he sneezed.

He heard and saw one of the strings on the guitar vibrate. It made sense, obviously his loud vocal sneeze was at the same frequency the

spring was tuned at.

Mike stopped and thought about it for a minute. A sound and caused a physical change in something else. He asked around in the various colleges and came up with an answer.

A professor told him he wanted to learn about transducers, Mike talked so fervently about it, that the professor gave him course options for a customized program.

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The program was scheduled for four years. Mike did it in two.

He was recommended for an instrumentation job in Hawkins National Lab, but also noted that he could be a transducer expert witness if the situation would ever come up.

Mike jumped at the chance to move back to Hawkins. His parents said he could even live in the house, as long as he paid utilities.

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When he stepped off the bus in Hawkins, tears came to his eyes.

He was home. And it was good.

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He was walking towards downtown and It wasn't until he was halfway to *Melvald's Groove* , when he remembered that it didn't exist anymore. He continued walking to see if anything had replaced that store, and to see what other changes had happened.

His smile went from ear to ear when he saw that nothing had changed at all. He was really home.

He took a quick glance at where *Melvald's Groove* used to be.

There was a new store in the same building called *Elevinyl* .

*Vinyl? Did someone take over from Don?*

He had to go see.

He walked into the store and a bell jingled.

He teared up again. *I'm really home.*

He walked into the store and almost fell over. There had to be a hundred thousand albums in the store. It must have been expanded farther back into the property.

He looked around in wonder.

"I want to live here." Mike said aloud.

"Now *that's* a vinyl lover." He heard her giggle. He looked at the cash counter, and a pretty girl with a very short pixie cut, and even prettier brown eyes was smiling at him.

He glanced down quickly at her breasts. *Ok, nice. She's wearing a Jethro Tull Aqualung t-shirt.*

He looked back up into her eyes and she was frowning.

*She caught me. Shit. How does a mouthbreather apologize for being a*



*mouthbreather?*

*He doesn't.*

Mike saw the store was empty.

He walked up to her. "Yeah, you caught me in a total mouthbreather moment."

"I've never heard that phrase outside of this town. You are from Hawkins."

"Yeah, but no excuse. I'm not even going to say nice t-shirt. I have that album... not my favourite of them but..."

"But you'd prefer to see my *frilly panties run*?"

Mike tried not to smile... "I guess it's no surprise you know the song."

"Do you know how many guys look at my boobs?"

Mike lowered his head. He wasn't even going to shake it to acknowledge her question.

"All of them. I can't complain. My breasts probably sell more vinyl than anyone in the state. But you... *you* are the first person to actually apologize... so... thank you."

Mike looked into her eyes. "You really speak your mind... let me return the favour. You have really pretty eyes... and it's those and your knowledge of music that will sell me vinyl... not your... uh... um..." Mike could no longer look at her.

To keep his eyes busy he looked at the shelves behind her.

His eyes went wide.

"Something catch your attention?"

"Is that... is that a T.Rex bootleg?" He looked at the plain black cardboard box with a pink wrapper on it.

## *T.Rex Tribute A Four Record Set*

“Uh, can I take a look at that.”

She smiled at him, “Of course. Bolan fan are you?”

“Yeah.”

She took it down off the shelf for him.

*For fuck's sake Mike. Don't cry. It's just T.Rex.*

He'd been able to collect some rare T.Rex vinyl while in Indianapolis, even with titles like *The Unobtainable T.Rex*. But he'd never actually seen a T.Rex bootleg.

He recognized very few songs on the pink wrapper listing.

The bootleg was fifty dollars. Mike would have paid a thousand... more even.

“Um, Don... um, who used to...”

She interrupted him, “Would you like me to put this aside for you?”

Mike lowered his head and nodded.

“Ok... you are *really* into T.Rex. I don't think I've had that reaction from *anybody* who had finally found an album they'd been looking for.”

“I didn't even know this existed. I'd buy it now, but I don't have the cash.”

“Ah, that explains it. Of course I'll hold it for you. ”

He looked at her. “Thank you. I'm going to look around some more.”

Mike didn't buy anything, he went up to thank her for holding the bootleg and then asked, “Ok I get the vinyl part of the store name, but not the first part.”

“My name is Eleven.”



## **2. My People Were Fair and Had Sky in Their Hair... But Now They're Content to Wear Stars on Their Brows**

*That's a pretty name. I wonder what her parents were thinking when they gave it to her.*

"So..." Eleven said casually, not quite looking at him. "What other bands do you like?"

"Don't laugh, but at one time I used to say my three favourite bands with, KISS, Black Sabbath, and ABBA. I have all their albums on vinyl."

"Of course you do," she winked, "what about now?"

"Well, T.Rex of course, but I collect Jethro Tull, very nice t-shirt by the way." She laughed as he intended, he was clearly referring to her boobs. Just as well, she'd have to lunge across the counter to slap him.

"Deep Purple and the various connected bands. I also collect Uriah Heep, Hawkwind... and just started..." Mike stopped. An album caught his eye near the front of the store.

It was *The Flowerpot Men*.

"No, he's not in the lineup for that album... you really know your groups." She said.

"So do you. Of the people I know, I can count on one finger who knew that Jon Lord was once in that band."

"It's my business. My dad gave me a real appreciation for seventies music."

“Ok, so back at ya, what are your favourite bands?”

“Well, first song I ever heard was *Jim Croce’s Don’t Mess around with Jim*. I like more complex music. *Chicago, Lighthouse, Yes, RDM’s Contamination* is one of my favourite albums.”

“English or Italian version?”

Her eyes went wide. “I can count on one boob the number of people I know that...” They both burst out laughing.

“Let me guess, Italian version is your favourite?”

“Tough call, I heard the English one, hundreds of times, but I like their native language just as much... um... I could talk to you for hours about music... but I have to unpack and settle in... would you like to... um... get coffee sometime?” Mike suddenly felt unsure of himself.

“Sometime or soontime?”

“How about I come back before you close, buy that bootleg, and we can go to Benny’s or something?”

“You have a date.”

Mike swore her eyes twinkled. He thought the butterflies would rip through his chest before his knees collapsed.

He had just asked a girl out!

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“Shit.” Mike saw that the door was locked and the *Closed* sign had

been turned over.

He had been looking forward to listening to the bootleg this weekend. He had been *really* hoping to talk to Eleven more... not just about music. He could just as easily stare into her eyes for a few hours. That would be time well spent.

Maybe she had second thoughts?

Mike went home and ordered a pizza instead.

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He moped around all weekend. He really wanted to go back to the store but he felt funny about doing it.

Mike wasn't quite sure what he did wrong.

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Hawkins lab was going to give him a custom designed panel van to work out of.. It was going to be his office. There were various control systems throughout the town, and it was his job to monitor them. He was lucky he didn't have to work in an office or a noisy lab. He did have to check in though, so he took a cab to the building, to get all of his authentication paperwork done.

He met his boss Dr. Sam Owens.

“You know what? I’m not even gonna pretend I know what you do. We have a lot of mechanical instruments here and in the area. Of course there is the special project you will be on. I’m not privy about those details, but I’ve heard that you are one of the top people to monitor or fix them. That kind of praise comes with a lot of money. The van was built to your specs.”

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Mike thought he would drive up to Pennhurst to see Will. He got about half way there before he saw lights flashing behind him. Hawkins’s finest were pulling him over. Modern cars had fixed any hysteresis issues with speedometers so he couldn’t fight any speeding ticket in court.

He pulled over and waited for the officer. *Probably Callahan or Powell.*

But it was Jim Hopper, Chief of Police.

Mike rolled the window down.

“Relax, I heard you were back in town. We can catch up later. I’ve got a guy with me. From some alphabet company I’ve never heard of. I told him to get his ass out of my town, but he gave me a phone number, and after the call I was convinced to do what he says. But... If he gives you any trouble kid, just let me know and I’ll make an *enhanced arrest*, while on the phone to that same number. They’ll get the message.”

“Don’t worry Chief. I knew this was coming. They don’t take no for an answer.”

“Right. I’m gonna give him 10 minutes in your van. I will escort him

back to his hotel room, regardless of what you say. Clear?”

“Yeah, thanks for having my back...”

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“So your name is Trask, and you work for INK. How do I know you didn’t just make all this shit up?”

“You were going to Pennhurst. None of his family still knows what happened to him.”

“But you do?”

“We have a good idea. Believe me we didn’t *not* want to appeal to your patriotism. That concept got perverted a long time ago. We want to appeal to your sense of justice. Justice for Barb, your sister’s friend, and justice for Will.”

“I have tried to put a lot of that shit behind me.”

“One thing Washington hasn’t figured out yet. All kinds of shit gets gone without their approval, or enough votes for a yes. But it has to be done.”

Mike sighed. “Yeah, I know. I don’t want to get mixed up in politics.”

“You let me take care of that. I know the Chief has your back, but INK does too. We have resources he doesn’t have. I hesitate to call them bottomless, but we don’t want you to fail because you didn’t have what you needed.”

“Um ok, but I spec’d out the equipment for this van. I can say with professional expertise that it is woefully under-powered for what you



want of me.”

“HNL contracted that out. Guess who did the work. They think we came in under budget and under ETA. That’s because we didn’t care what they wanted to pay. Original contract was for about a hundred thousand in equipment.”

Trask thumbed towards the back. “Stuff we added comes comes closer to ten million in equipment. Easily ten billion in research to get it there. Van itself is completely customized. It’s a tank, it will survive a tornado, and rocket fire. Probably twenty-five mil in technology in just the fan alone... again, research was ten times that amount.”

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Trask went on to explain everything.

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“Justice for Barb. Justice for Will. I’m in.”

“Will’s mother hasn’t figured out yet that we are covering everything. Nobody is going to have a bounced cheque, or a denied credit card. Do his family proud. That’s all we ask, because we know you want the same thing.”

“How am I going to live a normal life? I can’t do all you ask, without it being noticed.”

“You are talking about Eleven? Right?”

“Keep her out of this.”

Trask was silent.

“I mean it. She’s part of this then I’m out.”

“It’s complicated, but we will do our best. I promise.”

Mike swung his head up to stare him in the eyes.”

“Yes,” Trask said. “I know what that means to you and your friends. Ok, maybe this is a little bit of a carrot on a stick... but if you and Eleven get... *involved*. You can tell her everything.”

“Yeah, right. No way in hell that would happen.”

“She would understand.”

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Mike couldn’t see Will today. He wasn’t ready to see his friend that way.

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He wasn’t ready to go into the store yet either, but he really wanted that T.Rex bootleg. Get back some normalcy in his live.

He paused for a minute outside the door to *Elevynl*.

*I'm going to have to talk to her. If nothing else to ask to buy the album.*

She was wearing an *Electric Warrior* t-shirt that did nothing to hide her... *let's face it Mike....* beautiful cleavage.

There were a few people in the store, so he headed to the T.Rex section unnoticed. He found two more bootlegs, he grabbed them right away.

Tears came to his eyes again. He saw no less than twelve albums he'd never seen before. Even more exciting was the tracklisting. Mike realized how little he knew about his favourite band.

He heard the jingle of a bell. The one thing about a store that has a bell sound like that, is that everyone turns around to see who just entered. In a small town that happens in almost every store. The store was empty now except for her and Mike.

The person who walked in was Will's mom.

*Ugh. I don't think I can talk to her today. She's gonna wonder why I'm back in town and haven't seen will yet.*

"Hey mom, what are you doing in my little establishment?"

Mike didn't think he'd heard her right.

"Your dad just told me that Mike Wheeler is in town. You never met him, but he was one of Will's best friends. He was really cute. That hair... ok, I can't tell you that. But he is sponge-worthy Eleven."

"Geez mom, I have a customer in the store! Keep it down. I'm sure my dad will try to set me up with your help." She gave her mom a crooked smile.

Mike couldn't help but eavesdrop. He turned to look who her mom was.

"Mrs. Byers?"

She swiveled her head around, "Mike?"

They quickly crossed the floor to each other hugged. "It's Mrs. Hopper now."

"How's he doing?"

"The same Mike. Have you seen him yet."

Mike sighed. "No... when it's your fault... it's... a lot harder."

"Mike. Don't say that. The whole Party played the game. My boy had his... incident... and that's what he latched on to get back to us. You have to believe me..."

"Yeah... it's just hard... you know?"

"I'll go with you if you want? Might help?"

"Yeah... I'll let you know when I'm ready. Ok."

"You know the number. Different phone, but you know the number... and he still has his Supercomm."

Mike pulled back. "I'm so sorry for everything... uh did you say Mrs. Hopper? It's about time."

They both laughed. She kissed him on the cheek, said, "Bye honey," to Eleven and left.

Mike took his albums to the cash.

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He saw the bootleg back on the shelf.

*Shit. I almost missed it.*

She saw his glance.

“No, I’m not selling that after you asked me to put it away. I would never do that to a customer.”

“Customer.” Mike said in a neutral voice. It matched the look on her face.

“Can I explain?”

“You don’t need to you. You would not be my first rejection.”

“I was trying to make myself pretty for you. Took a bath. A dozen costume changes. I don’t have a watch... or a clock. I am not bound by time, Mike. You’ll have to get used to that.”

Mike smiled, “I didn’t actually give up on you. At first I thought you got cold feet. I’m a stranger after all. Then I thought. Ok, maybe some family stuff came up. That’s happened to me more than once... and then I thought... this one still bugs me a little... i t thought I didn’t wait long enough. Not as bad as *Fool in the Rain*. But maybe not that far off.”

Eleven grinned at the reference.

“So... pun aside... raincheck?”

“How about I up the ante?” She said.

“What did you have in mind?”

“I still dress pretty for you. But I also give you a home cooked meal... and a surprise I think you’ll appreciate.”

This all seemed like a fantasy to Mike. He thought of the title of the first *Tyrannosaurus Rex* album.

*Yes, definitely content to wear stars on my brow.*

“You are inviting me to your place?”

“I am.”

### 3. Kevin Bacon

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Can we say self-indulgent?

In case you are wondering, none if this took research.

I knew it already.

“Ok. When you said home cooked meal. I didn’t think you meant at *your* home.”

“I have two homes. This is probably the second most comfortable.”

“You are not going to tell me the first one... are you.”

“No. It’s my safe place and you don’t get to know that. At least... not right now.”

“I get it. ”

She looked at him. “I believe you do.”

“I also didn’t think you lived right above your store. That must be really convenient.”

She smiled, “It is... first things, first. I am going to make us dinner.”

She cast her eyes down, “Thanks for accepting. I thought I’d really blown it.”

Mike shook his head. “Had I known when you closed, I would have been here earlier. You don’t have the times posted on your door.”

“Must make it hard for your customers.”

“They think it’s quirky. I open and close whenever I want to. I eat and sleep whenever I want to.”

Mike nodded. “You are a free spirit.”

She gave him one of those smiles, from her mouth to her eyes. Mike felt very lightheaded.

“Much to my dad’s chagrin.” She finished. “I am trying to simplify my life. You’ll notice I don’t have any clocks, analog or digital, and I don’t wear a watch. I do what I want, when I want. So sometimes the store is open at three in the morning. And you know what? “

“You get customers.”

She nodded.

“Every now and then I have a dream about coming down here... when Don ran the store. Way after hours. I didn’t feel safe walking down the street, even though the last crime in Hawkins I think involved pumpkins. But when I walked into the store, I felt at home and safe. When I walked in here last week, I felt the exact same thing. Home and safe. Everyone should follow your example.”

“World would collapse, Mike.”

Mike nodded slowly. “You know, it’s funny, you are simplifying your life, and mine seems to get more complicated.”

“Oh? She said.

“Yeah, NDA crap I can’t tell you. Never mind. I believe I’m actually experiencing the Eleven Now of living in the present, and I’m very happy about it.”

Eleven gave Mike an even bigger smile.



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“Ok, I don’t hear very well, so if you could come out to the kitchen, while I cook, we can still talk. I’m having some white wine, cook’s prerogative ... would you like a beer? I have a Beautiful and Scotch lined up for later.”

“What’s a Beautiful? I mean... you know... besides yourself.”

“You sir, are a sweet talker... it’s an ounce of Grand Marnier, an ounce of Hennessy Cognac, orange peel twist at the bottom, and served in a brandy snifter titled on its side over another brandy snifter of very hot water, and oh my god that sounds so pretentious I can’t believe you haven’t walked out on me.”

Mike threw back his head and laughed. “I’ll take a beer for now, a very small sip of a Beautiful later. You know... just to see how pretentious it is... and finish with a Scotch.

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“Have you ever heard of the *Six degrees of Kevin Bacon* .”

They were both feeling the effects of the liquor but not enough to dull their senses... too much.

“Yeah, I’m really good with that game. I’ve watched a lot of movies. My friends used to hate when I started it... go ahead.”

“Ok, connect oh, Marc Bolan with Kevin Bacon.” She looked at him.

The challenge was on.

“That kind of mixes the entertainment platforms, but ok...”

“We’ll do just music next. That one just popped into my head.”

“Ringo Starr directed a movie, and was in, *Born to Boogie* with Marc Bolan. Ringo was also in, The Who documentary *The Kids Are Alright*. Steve Martin was in that movie.

Eleven finished for him, ‘And Steve Martin was in *Trains, Planes, and Automobiles* with Kevin Bacon. Ok that was too easy. Music only from now on.”

“I don’t want you getting mad at me if you can’t stump me.”

“Same here. I think of it as a challenge. I need to warn you, I have a lot of albums downstairs. Music trivia sticks to me like glue.”

“Me too.” Mike put his fingers to his temples... “Channeling Pat Benetar... hit me with your best shot.”

“Connect Tony Iommi with Steeleye Span.” She challenged.

“Ok. Before the band was known as Black Sabbath, they were called Earth. He left them for a short time to join Jethro Tull. A very short time. He was back in Earth which they renamed to the band we know now. One of the Jethro Tull lineups were the backing musicians for Maddy Prior’s solo album, *Woman in the Wings*. It does *not* sound like Jethro Tull though. Anyway, she was the lead vocalist for Steeleye Span.”

Eleven just looked at him.

“I will admit I thought the game was over when I hit you with that one. I mean, who actually keeps track of that kind of stuff?”

Mike put up his hand.

“Ok, stump me. Don’t make it that easy.”

“Ok, I would hate to see a frown on your face. I know it would be

unbelievably pretty, but I don't want to cause you any stress. So I'm going to tell you right off the bat. If you get this one, I am going to propose to you with all the sincerity I can muster."

"I already want to sleep with you tonight... give me your worst."

Mike was inspired. "A primer, which group has the line in their song, *I'd do my very worst for you.*"

"Please Mike. Thor of course. *Catch a Tiger* from the Keep the Dogs Away album."

"I was just getting you warmed up."

"Slight trick question. Connect Christine McVie with *both* MeatLoaf and Whitesnake."

"Can we pick out a ring tomorrow?"

"If you get this sure."

"This is a little convoluted, so try and follow me on this." She said sarcastically.

"Before she was Christine McVie, she was Christine Perfect."

"She was in a British Blues band called Chicken Shack."

"The trick part of the question is that the connection's are not linear, but we don't care about that. It's about the knowledge... right?"

Mike nodded.

"Ok, fork one. Chicken Shack had John Glascock playing bass. He went on to Jethro Tull, obviously, but he also played in a band called Wild Turkey with Bernie Marsden.

"Bernie Marsden of course was in Whitesnake."

"Fork two. Bonus fork. Bernie Marseon was also in Paice Ashton Lord. Both Ian Paice, and Jon Lord were both in Whitesnake.

"As an aside... Tony Ashton was also in Chicken Shack. Whitesnake is

covered.”

“Fork three. Ed Spivok played drums in one of the Chicken Shack lineups. He also played in Babe Ruth... with Alan Shacklock. Alan Shacklock produced Dead Ringers by Meatloaf. Bonus trivia Shacklock produced the music for the movie Quicksilver starring Kevin Bacon.”

“Shit. You’re smart.” Mike said, almost dumbfounded.

“ *You* challenged me. You already knew all this.”

“Well, It’s simple really... will you marry me.”

"Don't play games with my heart."

"I am deadly serious Eleven."

“Then... yes. But we are sleeping together first. If you are no good in the sack, the deals off.”

Mike blinked a few times.

*This is not real. It can't be.*

## 4. Maureen McGovern

“It was a compliment and kind of a half joke when I said you were a free spirit.”

“I’ve always wanted to have something that felt like a one night stand... but really wasn’t.”

“One night stand? Uh, do you want me to leave?”

“No. Do you want to leave? I was referring to going to bed with a guy who’s name I didn’t know.”

“Oh. Um, oh shit. It’s Mike Wheeler.”

“No, but I’m exhausted... um... you were very free with your body.”

“It goes with the free spirit. Do you want to take a walk? We can open the store and listen to music.”

“The way my mom and dad talk about you, i’d sort of guessed. There were only three things I didn’t know about you. Other than your name. You are very good looking. You are smart. And you are hung... all positives in my book.”

Mike responded, “*You* are smart. You are really pretty and of course you have big tits. I think we are even?”

“Ok. I deserved that one.”

“Holding your hand with a cool nights breeze, listening to good music when we are done....”

“And getting married tomorrow... if you were serious.”

“I was serious El.”

“El?” She asked.

“Short for Eleven. If you don’t like it...”

“From you... I love that name.”

XXXXX

El suddenly stopped. Her grip on Mike’s hand became almost painfully tight.

“What’s wrong?”

“Do you see that van there? Parked in front of my store?”

“Yes. I parked it there, you didn’t see it because we went out the back for our walk. Hawkins lab had it customized for me and... uh... can’t tell you that.”

El tore her hand away from Mike and spun on him. Her eyes hateful, “You *work* for them?!”

“Yeeeeees.” Mike wasn’t sure where this was going.

“That’s all I need to know. I don’t want to see you or talk to you again. You are banned from my store. You have five minutes to move that van from the parking space or I flatten it.

“What did I do?”

“Fuck off asshole.”

XXXXXX

Lucas walked up to El at the counter and said. "Don't kill the messenger."

"If it's from that asshole, he can go fuck himself in the neck."

"That asshole you are referring to is my friend. Not only is he one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet... and... ... and you know what? Fuck it. He paid close to a thousand dollars for merchandise and would like me to pick it up for him."

"Tell him to pick it up for himself."

"He's banned from the store, and you don't want to see him or talk to him again. Those albums are from his favourite band. Mike has had a hard enough life, but if you want to punish him with an extra bit of cruelty, you can refuse."

"Did he say that?"

"No I did. His friend."

"I thought I was his friend too. Until he lied to me."

"Mike would never lie to his friends... or the girl he'd just asked to marry him."

El's rolled her eyes, "Please... he did that as a joke."

Lucas reached into his pocket, pulled out a sealed envelope that jingled. "These are rings. He didn't know your size, so he just picked up eleven different sizes. They all have the same inscription."

“I’ll bet they do. You read them?”

“No, that shit is private between you and him.”

El opened up the envelope and took out one ring, she tilted it close to her eyes so she could read the inscription.

*“Baby, I’m crazy ‘bout your breasts.”* She smiled. She got both references.

“Ok, he probably doesn’t know why I went off on him. I can at least explain that to him. I’ll keep his albums... tell him he’s unbanned from the store and he can talk to me.”

Lucas looked at her. “You must have had a bigger affect on him than you realize. He said that Hawkins wasn’t really home anymore, the two things he loved about the place were off limits to him... I *think* he was talking about you and your store...”

El thought of the inscription.

“Maybe.” she said, trying not to smile. “We are not off limits anymore.”

Lucas shrugged. “Too late anyway. He quit his job and left Hawkins last night. He asked me to pick up the records, he would make arrangements to get them.”

“What?! But... it wasn’t a big fight... I mean... I was mad... and... I didn’t think I meant that much to him... we only spent one night... uh...” El blushed.

Lucas smiled, “TMI.... sooooo, can I have them?”

El steeled herself. “No, if he wants them, tell him to think of the Badfinger song. He’ll get what you mean.”

XXXXX



El waited for his call.

She sat by the phone in the store. She didn't have a phone in her apartment. It was part of her simplifying her life.

She dozed on and off at the counter, only the sound of the bell rousing her for customers that came in.

She almost gave up on him. She didn't know how many days had passed.

She talked to her mom when she was in the store one day, "I don't know why I feel this way about him. Our only connection was music."

"Sometimes a sound connection is all you need." Joyce said. "You already had an intellectual connection, you probably slept together..."

El blushed again.

"It's not a crime honey. You were born out of time, you should have had your teens in the sixties. Your dad has a hard time with you living a bohemian lifestyle... *but* he knows why, he would never say anything..."

The door jingled. The bell doing it's job.

Mike walked in.

He looked like he hadn't slept the entire time he was gone. Or that he'd been crying. "I got your message." He said.

"Mike!"

El came running around the counter throwing herself at Mike, her arms around his neck.

Mike's arms stayed at his side.

El stepped back. Her head down. "I get it. I hurt you too much."

"I didn't understand El. But now I do."

"Mike... you can't possibly understand what I went through."

Dual tears trickled down Mike's cheek.

"Yeah... I think I do. Let me explain?"

El looked at him with the hope of a girl looking at reuniting with a soulmate. She nodded.

"Would you like to come in my office?"

"I would *love* to come in your office."

"Ok, we can do that too... but first I need to show you something."

XXXXX

"Ok, Mike you are scaring me. How did you get this stuff. My dad couldn't even get it. And he was willing to punch people out for it."

"I signed an NDA. It means Non Disclosure Agreement. But... I love you. I'm actually not telling you anything you don't already know. But the law is the stupid law that it is... so..."

"I would never put you in harm's way Mike."

XXXXX

“Mike? Have you been sleeping here?” El looked down at the sleeping bag between banks of instruments on both sides of the van walls.

Mike sighed.

“Let me give you the short version.”

“Why the short version.”

“Longer I talk, longer time before I can kiss you.”

“Short version.” El said with a slight smile on her face.

XXXXX

“So you know everything.” El said it as a statement, but she could see from the tears cascading down his face that he did.

He gave her an unneeded nod.

“And you still want to be with me?”

His voice was unsteady, “More than I can possibly express. You just have to believe me.”

El nodded. ‘You know what this means right?’

Mike looked up, slightly scared at what the answer might be..

“Make-up sex. Keep your office parked here. Let’s go up to my place.”

XXXXX

“I didn’t think I’d ever say that... you know... during.” Mike said.

“Maybe most girls find that guys saying ‘I love you’ during sex is cheezy. But *this* girl knows you mean it.”

Mike cleared his throat. “I don’t want to lose you, El. You are perfect for me.”

“You are perfect for me too. Joyce said so.”

“Joyce? I thought I heard you call her *mom* ?”

“You did. I call her that to make her feel better. My dad likes it when I do also.”

“But she doesn’t feel like your mom?”

“She does not. She did something years ago which proved she didn’t

have my best interests at heart. I know she loves me... but not like her sons. I just can't return any kind of love."

"I'm sorry, El. I didn't know."

"You had no reason to. Don't get me wrong. I don't hate her. But... I don't know... she knows the way I feel about you. That's something at least."

"Um... El... um... I should tell you that I'm really into T.Rex."

El burst out laughing, "Yes, I have your albums... and... if you were serious... I will wear your ring."

"You weren't offended?"

"No. I know where the references came from. It makes it more... special for me. I used to hate them. "

"I love you... seemed... trite."

"Mike... the inscription was perfect. " El laughed... "Ok, I can never show my parents so it's our little secret. You... still want to right?"

"Marry you? Uh, yeah. This is sudden... I know... too quick for your dad if I had to guess."

"He will still want to give me away."

"It's the kind of guy he is, El."

## 5. The Order

“Let’s talk shop.”

“Ok... um, El... it would be much easier if you um... wore clothes?”

“What do you mean? I’m wearing panties.”

“Women can’t go topless in this state... at least not yet. A few more old grey haired men need to die first. But... you have a fantastic...uh... set... uh... rack... uh bazooms... uh tatas... did that cover it? If you don’t want me um... talking that way about them... I’ll stop.”

El laughed. “Maybe I’m setting the women's movement back a few decades... or more... but I do appreciate that you... appreciate my body.”

“You ever want to start a fapping website... uh... scratch that...”

El laughed again... “This is all yours Mike. Before or after the ring ceremony.”

Mike got quiet.

“You... still want to... right?”

“Yes... I didn’t think you still did.”

“I have never been more sure.”

Mike let out a sigh of relief.

“You ok?”

“El... um... I don’t know how to say this without sounding like a

pretentious wanker... you are the *only* person... definitely the only girl I have ever met... who...um... was a musically informed ...um that I like. The music thing used to be the most important thing in my life. I was lonely because of it.”

“What’s your favourite *Blind Faith* song?”

“*Sea of Joy*. Stevie Winwood’s voice is amazing on that song.”

“Wow Mike. I... you really get seventies music.”

“I do?”

“I am going to blow your mind with good songs.”

“Ok. Give me something I should... oh wait... I notice you don’t have any kind of record collection.”

“Did you just say that?” El asked with a laugh.

“Uh... I mean, I see the two turntables there... they look familiar... but no albums?”

“Those are Sony PS-LX2’s. Direct drive. I’m not searching for the right belts 30 years from now for those turntables. They are also brushless and spotless. No motor frumble comes from them whatsoever... as for albums... have you seen my downstairs room? ”

“But those aren’t yours... they are for sale.”

“True. But I have dupes of a lot of albums... you know what? Let’s get dressed and go down there and try to educate each other.”

“I will admit I don’t know everything,” Mike said. “But I am a very pliable student.”

XXXXXX

Rod Stewart's voice filled the room.

“Ok, if you were starting me off with an easy one... I’m not sure I even know this...”

“Ha ha, Mike. Very funny. Name the guitarist.”

“Python Lee Jackson... this *In a Broken Dream* . Rod Stewart probably did this when he was twelve or something.”

El reached from the stack of albums she wouldn't let Mike see. She knew he'd probably recognized albums just from their spine.

“Ok, that’s *Maggot Brain* from Funkadelic... Eddie Hazel on guitar. Look for the live version of this on Youtube. I think it’s better than the studio version.

“Ok, no more guitarists for you. Too easy. Your turn. Stump me.”

XXXXX

“Name the bassist.”

“Ooh! Rob Grange, that phased bass line is very unique. I play *Stranglehold* a little punchier but I like that sound.”

“Ok... no more bassists for you.”

El pouted.



"I have to make it challenging or you'll just think I'm making it easy for you so you'll have sex with me again."

El laughed. "Ok. Challenging. So no bassists then. I want you to work for my body."

"That's the spirit."

"Ok, also no Spirit, or any other tunes Led Zeppelin ripped off."

"How could you possibly know I was going to do that?"

"Soulmates Mike."

Mike nodded slowly. "Yeah. I think so... but I still like Zep."

"Me too, and it's criminal, but their take on the songs was good. Did you know that sometimes they didn't even bother to change they lyrics? Anyway. That's all been hashed out on Youtube. Oh! Ok, here's one along the lines of Six degrees we did... earlier...."

Mike went to to two bins and pulled out two albums. "I'm only going to play the song until you recognize it, and then you tell me what the connection is. You get stumped... you have sex with me in your store in the back. Up to you whether or not you want to lock the front door or not."

"I can tell by the look in your eyes Mike that you are at least half serious. Go for it. I won't fail on purpose." She winked at him.

Mike played her Zeppelin's *Kashmir*, and then Roy Harper's *One Man Rock and Roll Band*, and then to throw her off the trail played her Rory Gallagher's *Out on the Western Plain*.

"Rory's cute too..."

"Of course you'd say that."

"Ok the connection to the first two is obvious, and that means there's another connection that also connects Rory's version of the Leadbelly song."

A few minutes later Mike said, “Stumped yet?”

“I’m going through musicians on the songs in my head, engineers, producers... album covers that had those songs... and sadly, because you played Led Zeppelin I was thinking of song phrases, signatures that, they may have lifted outright or borrowed... Oh I know. Damn, that’s really good Mike. “

“I’m not hearing the answer...”

“DADGAD.”

Mike was silent. He nodded looking at her in wonder.

“I’ll top that off with some trivia. DADGAD is why most guys starting to play guitar can’t figure it out *Kashmir*”

“You are amazing El.”

XXXXXX

“I want to be amazing for you Mike. We share a passion of music... and each other. I want to do something for you that , first off I know I can, and second... that I know you will appreciate.”

“I think we’ve already done that El.”

“You’re such a guy. But, this will satisfy more than your lust for my body.” El and Mike laughed together.

“Ok. I’m really not sure how you can make me happier...”

“I want to order for you whatever T.Rex you don’t have. There must

be some albums you don't have."

"I really do appreciate the offer El... but I don't want you to be disappointed when you can't get them... or any T.Rex for that matter. The vinyl is notoriously hard to find."

"Is that a challenge Mike? I'm very good at this."

"I will still love you if not... ok?"

"You have no idea who you've hooked up with Mike."

Mike glanced toward the direction of the van. "I think I do... and I think that's why I love you as much as I do."

"Ok. that's it mister. Get upstairs and take your clothes off. We are going to have sex again."

"Uh..."

XXXXXX

"Can I guess which albums you don't have?"

Mike smiled, "Sure."

"Ok, You don't have *Zinc Alloy*, and you don't have *Zip Gun*. But... you probably have *Light of Love* and that's why you want them. Well you want any and all T.Rex, but you know what I mean."

"Yes. Yes. Yes... aaaand yes. But..."

El held up her hands... "I know, I know. But at least give me a try?"

"I can't tell you how I feel right now. Love. Hope. Elation? All of those. Also El. Money is no object. I don't want these for free."

“Oh, I’m gonna charge you. I’m not going to gouge you, I’ll add my markup for specialty orders. I want you to respect me as a business woman.”

“Good.”

XXXXX

El sighed on Mike’s chest.

“How do you feel this morning Mrs. Wheeler?”

“I feel like your woman.”

“Well, sexist comment aside, you *are* my woman. You know... and my vinyl girl.”

“Elevinyl. Yes I am. I made the order last night Mike. I hate to admit that you were right those are hard to find, but I have a secret weapon you don’t know about.”

“I know about your boobs, El. Please don’t tell me you had to attach a pic for your order.”

El laughed so hard she started to cough. “You are the only person that gets to see them... with no t-shirt. They are still a selling tool for me in the store. Sorry Mike. I use what I have.”

“Yeah, I know. If I had to guess you went bra-less long before you took over the store.”

Mike tightened his hug on her. “It’s ok. I will tell you something... I’m still trying to figure out why you don’t hum, show... um... uh.”

“Mike, you have permission to freely describe my erect nipples.”

El could feel the heat from Mike’s face. “I don’t mean to embarrass you... Mike I’m yours.”

“I won't use euphemisms. You keep the store cool, good idea for vinyl... when you decide to um... sell a lot of albums... how do you hide your erect nipples?”

El laughed. “You were so careful with your words. I’m now finding all the little reasons why I love you. I use silicone pasties. They work under any top.”

“Girls have a lot of secrets.”

“So many Mike, that if you knew them all... well... I’d have to tell the Sisterhood and sell you as a male oncubine... but don’t worry... I would get a lot of money for you and be able to retire.”

“You had me at concubine. Tell me everything.”

El swatted him playfully. “You are mine... and mine alone.”

“I was just thinking... I wouldn't be able to listen to T.Rex anymore. That would be the eleventh circle of hell.”

“Exactly. Stay on your toes... my concubine.”

### **Author's Note:**

This is the bootleg Mike saw: <https://www.popsike.com/TREX-A-TRIBUTE-BOOTLEG-MEGA-RARE-4-LP-BOX-SET/160135396831.html>